

## Valentine's Virus by FallingStar95

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**Summary:**

“Jonathan Byers, you are sick. The last thing you should be doing is homework!”

When an illness prevents Jonathan from taking Nancy out for Valentine's Day like they'd originally planned, she just decides to surprise him at home instead. SOMEONE needs to take care of him, after all, since he won't do it himself!

## Valentine's Virus

The phone ringing in her room almost caused Nancy to spill the subtle pink nail polish she was putting on for Valentine's Day, but it brought a smile to her face anyway as she thought about who was likely on the other side of the call. Only one person called this line.

She slowly set down the bottle of Sally Hansen lacquer on her white dresser before picking up the receiver in her cupped palm, taking care not to smear her pristine new paint job. "Hey, Jon!"

She was substantially confused when she heard a warm, female laugh that was most certainly *not* Jonathan. "Nancy, dear! This is Joyce. How are you?"

"Oh, um, Hi, Mrs. Byers," Nancy stuttered, slightly embarrassed. "I'm doing well, thanks. How are you?"

"I'm fine, sweetie. Thank you," the woman replied, but Nancy's brow furrowed when she heard her boyfriend's mother sigh. "Unfortunately, my own wellbeing isn't the problem, at the moment. It's Jonathan's."

Nancy sat up a bit straighter. "Is he okay?"

"Oh my goodness, yes, don't worry! He'll be fine in a few days, I'm sure," Joyce reassured her. "But he is sick, so I'm afraid he's not going to be able to make it out tonight for Valentine's Day. I'm very sorry, dear!"

Nancy shook her head. "No, I understand," she responded, although she did feel a sinking in her stomach. She'd really been looking forward to seeing him. He hadn't been in school so far this week, and she supposed this was why. "What does he have? A cold or something?"

"No, it *was* just a cold, at first," Joyce explained. "But he kept driving Will places and taking shifts over the weekend anyways, even though I *told him* to take care of himself while I was at work."

Nancy could tell where this was headed; it had been freezing outside this weekend. "And now?"

"Well... the doctor says it's walking pneumonia."

Nancy let out a long sigh. She loved her boyfriend more than words could describe... but he could really be an idiot sometimes. "Is he at home or the hospital?"

"He's home now. We just went in and got him some antiviral meds this morning," Joyce told her. "He'll be fine though, sweetheart. He just needs a few days' rest."

Nancy nodded. "I know. Mike had walking pneumonia a few years back too."

Mike had gotten the disease after going outside to play in the snow with his friends, even after their mother had told him not to since he was recovering from a fever. However, once he was laid-up, Nancy had helped her parents to take care of him since her mother had been heavily pregnant with Holly and couldn't be on her feet for long periods of time. But her mother had assured her it wouldn't be a problem since pneumonia itself wasn't a contagious condition.

Wait... pneumonia wasn't *contagious*! Only the germs that had originally caused it were contagious, and she was sure Jonathan would have flushed those out of his system by now.

"Um, Mrs. Byers, would you mind if I actually came over there for a little while?" Nancy questioned cautiously. "I know it's not entirely my place to ask, but..."

"No, sweetie, that's perfectly fine!" Joyce assured her. "I'm actually out the door heading to Melvald's right now, and Steve just took Will and his friends out to the movies, so... I *would* really love it if someone was here to keep him company."

Nancy smiled. "Okay. I'll be over in a little bit then," she told her. "And one more thing... could you *not* tell Jonathan I'm coming? I get the feeling he hates being taken care of."

She heard a genuine laugh arise from Joyce on the other end. "Tell

me about it! When I tried to take him in to the doctor this morning, I practically had to drag him out of bed because he knew it would interfere with your Valentine's Day plans."

Nancy felt her chest go warm at that. Yes, Jonathan was occasionally an idiot... but he was a pretty lovable one.

"I'll try to convince him otherwise," she assured Joyce with a grin. "Just leave a key under the mat, and I'll let myself in."

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She arrived at the Byers' house about a half hour later, armed with all the supplies she'd been able to dig out of her family's pantry: a can of chicken noodle soup, some cough drops, and a few different varieties of herbal tea. She'd made a quick stop by the video store, as well, and picked out a few different rentals for them to watch. She didn't bother to knock, knowing he was the only one home, so she unlocked the door and let herself into the house. "Jonathan?"

"Nancy...?" she heard him call, followed up with a wet cough. "What are you doing here?"

She followed his voice out to the kitchen, where he was sitting at the table writing on a pad of paper, working on what seemed to be homework, an essay of some sort, and as much as she'd like to think otherwise, he looked *horrible*. His face was eerily pale, making the angles of his jaw and cheekbones look sallow and more pronounced. And if possible, it seemed like he'd gotten just a bit thinner in the span of a few days, not to mention the presence of shadowy bags under his eyes, signaling a significant lack of sleep.

So she was more than a little annoyed at the sight of him working on something besides getting himself well again. "Jonathan Byers, you are sick. The *last* thing you should be doing is homework."

He opened his mouth to respond. "But it's—"

"No buts!" she cut him off, striding over and pulling him to his feet so she could march him out of the kitchen. "It may be your own

damn fault you got this way, but so help me, I am going to make sure you get better.”

“Nancy, I’m fine—”

“No, you’re not. You need to *rest*,” she insisted, leading him over to the couch in the living room. “Now lay down,” she ordered, pushing lightly on his chest until he sunk down onto the cushions.

He narrowed his eyes at her as she grabbed a blanket and threw it over him. “*Naaance*,” he groaned, but the prolonged vowel only caused his breath to hitch, and he quickly devolved into a hoarse fit of coughing. She tried not to wince at how *awful* he sounded, simply rubbing her hand gently across his back as he tried to get it out of his system.

Once it had finally ended, he laid back against the arm of the couch and cleared his throat loudly. “Sorry,” he croaked, his chest continuing to rattle as he breathed. “I know I sound pretty gross right now.”

Nancy gave him a small, sympathetic smile, gently patting his shoulder. “Which is exactly why I’m here,” she enlightened him. “To make sure you’re actually *trying* to get well again.”

He let out a sigh that sounded a bit like a lawnmower. “I’m just bored,” he told her, taking her hand in his and tangling their fingers together. “And I feel bad that I can’t take you out tonight anymore.”

Nancy shook her head. “Even if your mom hadn’t taken you in and gotten a diagnosis, I *still* wouldn’t let you go out like this,” she assured him. “No offense, Jon, but you look and sound like you swallowed a bucket of nails,” she told him. “Bent-up, rusty nails.”

“Gee, thanks,” he deadpanned, a slight smirk pulling at the corners of his lips. However, he was only able to return her gaze for a moment before he bent over and let out another round of coughs, and although they weren’t quite as intense as before, he still looked miserable regardless.

“What can I do to help you feel better?” she asked, moving her hand

to brush his dirty blonde fringe out of his face. However, when her hand touched his face, the resulting heat was enough to make her jump. "Jesus... You've definitely got a fever, Jon!"

He merely shrugged his shoulders in response. "It was worse this morning," he casually reported, although he couldn't help the bout of shivering that occurred as she laid her palm flat against his forehead. "The meds are working, I think."

"Still, that can't be comfortable," Nancy insisted, sliding her hand down to rest against his flushed cheek. "Hang on a minute."

She dashed into the kitchen and grabbed a clean washcloth from a drawer by the sink, soaking it in cool water and wringing it out so it was suitably damp. Returning to the living room, she knelt down and placed it on his forehead, applying gentle pressure with her hand. "Any better?"

He gave a sleepy, noncommittal grunt, his eyelids beginning to droop as she caressed his face. She could tell he hadn't been sleeping well as of late, probably due to the incessant coughing fits; he looked completely exhausted. But now that he was somewhat relaxed and not at risk of coughing up a lung, she climbed up onto the couch behind him and pulled his head gently into her lap. "Try to get some sleep, okay? You look like you really need it," she whispered, running her fingers through the wild mess of his hair.

He weakly nodded his head in response, curling himself into a tight ball in an attempt to fight off the chills that now ran through him. Nancy quickly noticed his continuous shivering and shuffled down so she could wrap her arms around him, hoping to transfer some of her body heat. Tugging at the end of his blanket, she pulled the fabric tightly around the pair of them before grabbing a nearby pillow to shove under his head in place of her legs.

Almost immediately, she felt a great deal of tension leave his body, and he let out a contented sigh as he buried his face near the crook of her shoulder. "Thanks, Nance... I love you," he breathed against her skin, his nose lightly tickling her neck as he nuzzled closer to her. "I really, *really* love you."

She wasn't sure if it was just the fever or the exhaustion (or both) making him especially affectionate, but it brought a wide smile to her face nonetheless. "I really love you, too," she laughed quietly. She took a moment to adjust the towel that was starting to slip off his forehead before pressing a kiss to his warm cheek and settling herself back beside him. "Now, for God's sake, go to *sleep*."

Jonathan smirked, his eyes still peacefully closed. "Yes, ma'am," he mumbled into her shoulder as he finally began to doze off.

Within minutes, he was out like a light.

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Nancy wasn't sure when she had fallen asleep, but when she awoke to the sound of Jonathan having another coughing fit on the edge of the couch, the clock told her it had only been a little over an hour. She sat up, throwing off the blanket, and began to rub his back as she had earlier. Not knowing what else she could do, she simply murmured sweet nothings into his ear until he could finally breathe again, his head hanging limply towards the floor.

She ran her hand up and down his spine a couple times before letting her fingers trail up to massage his scalp, hoping her actions were providing at least a little bit of comfort. "God, you really did yourself in this weekend, huh?" she sighed, trying and failing to push wayward strands of hair out of his face.

He groaned. "Oh, great... let me guess, my mom told you that?"

Nancy shrugged. "Well, she told me you did kinda wear yourself out," she admitted. "If Will needed to go somewhere and your mom was working, you should've just *called* me, Jonathan. I could've come and picked him up!"

Jonathan shook his head. "I was on my way to work anyway..."

"You should've have been there *either*!" Nancy replied, throwing her hands up in exasperation. "You really need to take better care of yourself sometimes."

He let out a long, raspy exhale to steady himself before answering. "Nance, you *know* we've always been tight on cash..."

"But your health is more important—"

"Can't we just drop it?" he bit out. "I got sick. End of story."

She flinched a little bit at his tone but slowly nodded, biting her lip. "Okay," she hesitantly agreed, looking down at her lap. She didn't know what else to say.

He seemed to pick up on her change in body language fairly quickly, letting out a short sigh. "I'm sorry," he said softly, reaching over to hold her hand.

She laced her fingers with his, looking up at his apologetic expression. "It's alright, Jon. It's just..." she trailed off, trying to figure out how to best express what was in her head. "I *know* that you don't like asking for help a lot, but if you do have to, it doesn't mean that *you're* helpless," she told him. "I know you're strong and that you're capable of being there for your family. We all know that... But we're here to help you when there are times that you can't."

He seemed to mull over her words for a minute or so, but when he didn't reply right away, she continued. "I know you're used to taking care of people, but you have to let us take care of you, too," she rationalized, a small smile coming to her face. "You're *well worth* fussing over every once in a while, Jonathan!"

He let out a small cough that she knew was supposed to be a laugh. Still facing the floor, he slowly nodded his head before lifting himself up to face her. "Thanks," he croaked, the corners of his lips turning upward at her. "I'm sorry again that I snapped at you."

"It's okay. I still love you," she assured him, which earned her another laugh-cough hybrid. She leaned in to kiss his cheek and was pleasantly surprised by how much his fever had lessened. "You definitely feel less warm now," she told him, placing her hand on his forehead. "Do you want to try and eat something?"

At his resulting nod, she stood up and pulled the can of soup from



her backpack before heading into the kitchen. Grabbing a pot from the cupboard, she began warming the mixture of broth, noodles, and vegetables on the stovetop, idly milling around the room as she waited. For a moment, she contemplated going to turn on the TV in the living room, but considering her past track record with cooking-related mishaps, she figured she'd better stay to keep an eye on the task at hand. However, she became distracted anyway the minute she sat down at the kitchen table, her eyes glancing over the homework Jonathan had been working on when she'd arrived a couple hours prior.

...Except it wasn't homework.

The pad of paper, which had been propped open, had now fallen back to the first page, and at the top of it was written 'Dear Nancy...' in that neat scrawl she knew to be his handwriting. Biting her lip indecisively, she eventually gave into temptation and began to read what he had written so far:

*'Dear Nancy,*

*I've been staring down at this pen for nearly ten minutes trying to think of what to write, but I honestly don't know how to start. Not because I don't have enough to write about, but because I don't know how to put what's in my head onto paper.*

*Honestly, I've never been much of a writer outside of school, so I was just planning on getting you a card at the store, the cheesy kind they always put out around Valentine's Day, but that was when I was actually going to take you out on a date too. So now that I'm stuck here for a while, I figured this was the least I could do since my mom's got me on house arrest.*

*I know you're probably rolling your eyes right now. And before you come and say it to my face: Yes, I know I got myself into this, I should've stayed in bed, I'm supposed to be smarter than this, et cetera. But I really needed those extra shifts, Nancy.*

*Because I kind of already got us tickets to see Billy Joel in Indy next*

*month... Surprise!’*

Nancy had to throw her hand over her mouth to contain the squeal that threatened to erupt from her. Billy Joel was one of her favorite singers of all time, and she’d made Jonathan listen to *The Stranger* with her more times than she could count, so this revelation was easily enough to bring happy tears to her eyes. Pressing her lips together to keep herself quiet, she continued reading:

*‘I’m sorry I didn’t tell you earlier. I wanted to give you the tickets tonight over dinner or something, but then this happened. I’ve never been angrier with my immune system in my life! Not that I’ve ever been particularly furious with it before, but... God, you get what I’m trying to say, right? I’m pissed things didn’t work out the way I wanted them to.*

*But then again, when do they ever? Neither of us asked for last year to happen. Or the things that happened last November, for that matter! But regardless of how messed up our lives can get or how many nightmares either of us have, I’m glad about one thing:*

*You can probably guess where I’m going here.*

*Up until a few months ago, I never could’ve imagined that night at Murray’s actually happening. But by some crazy twist of fate, it did, and I feel like I’ve been pinching myself ever since to make sure I’m not dreaming.*

*Wow, that came out even cheesier than the stupid card I was going to get you before. I guess you can’t escape it around Valentine’s Day... sorry.*

*But in all seriousness – I love you, Nancy. And the minute I’m not coughing every five seconds, I’ll find some way to’*

The letter stopped mid-sentence. That was apparently all he’d had time to write before she’d made her entrance earlier that day.

She stared down at the pad of paper, which was now flipped open to

the third page, but she didn't realize she was still crying until she saw a drop of water fall onto the ink below. She quickly wiped at her face, trying to cover up the fact that she'd read the letter, but her efforts were in vain as Jonathan entered the kitchen, blanket wrapped tightly around his shoulders. "Nancy, what are you—"

He froze when he saw her holding the letter with red-rimmed eyes. "Shit," he mumbled, dropping his head into his hand. "I forgot that was out here. I'm sorry it wasn't done ye—"

She cut him off by darting across the room and pressing her lips to his.

He was shocked for a moment, but soon pulled away to cough discreetly into his elbow. "Nance, I don't want you to get sick too!"

She shook her head with a defiant grin. "I don't care."

He rolled his eyes but couldn't hide the crooked smile that took over his face. "You say that *now*, but you're not going to be happy if *you're* the one who's bedridden tomorrow," he teased.

"By itself, pneumonia isn't contagious. So that's yours to keep," she shot back at him, reaching up to wrap her arms around his neck. "But even if I did get something from you, then you can just return the favor and take care of *me*."

He chuckled softly before heading to the drawer where Nancy knew Joyce kept all of their important documents and pulled out a sealed envelope, which she quickly realized were their concert tickets. With his signature crooked smile, he handed it to her, his grin widening at her excited expression. "Whatever happens, let's just make sure neither of us ends up sick the second weekend in March, okay? It'd kinda suck if these went to waste."

"Thank you, thank you, *thank you!*" she squealed, wrapping her arms tightly around him. "I love you!"

He laughed. "I love you too," he replied, kissing the top of her head.

She smiled happily against his chest before looking back up at his face with a slight mischievous air. "First weekend in April is off-

limits, too, by the way,” she mentioned casually, grinning at the resulting confusion on his face. “Because *I* got us tickets to see Dire Straits.”

He gasped, which only caused him to break back down into violent coughs again, but the look on his face assured her that the excitement he felt was well worth the reaction it caused.

“You are... the *best*... girlfriend... *EVER*,” he choked out between breaths, but when he finally regained himself, she immediately re-attached herself to him.

“And you’re not so bad yourself, sickie,” she teased him, reaching up to tousle his already-messy hair. “Happy Valentine’s Day.”

### **Author's Note:**

Hey y'all! So, I kinda started this two weeks ago for Jancy Fic Week and meant to have it up on Valentine's Day... obviously. But life (\*ahem\* college... specifically my senior project) got in the way, and I didn't have a chance to pick this back up and finish it until now. Regardless, I hope you enjoyed it! And as always, feel free to leave your thoughts and/or prompts in the comments below :)